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TRANSLATION

CNRM-FALINTIL

Message of Solidarity to Political Prisoners in the Philippines

Ladies and Gentlemen, Participants in the APCET Meeting, Bangkok

There is no more adequate a forum for the peoples of the Asia-Pacific region to voice the common interests uniting them than a meeting such as this APCET Conference. Originating from different parts of the region, we are demanding here that the world respect our rights which have been violated by military regimes such as that of Myanmar or by dictatorial-expansionist ones such as that led by Suharto.

As political prisoners, the Timorese people are well acquainted with the repression of anti-democratic regimes and they feel in their skin the most unimaginable forms of human rights violation.

And looking at this region gives us goose bumps. Human Rights are discredited or simply interpreted by governments as the rights of those holding political and, above all, economic power; the right to go unchallenged, to not be criticised and to institutionalise violence and crime. And such an attitude is justifiefed to the world as being in the interests of "preserving peace and national security", peace meaning tranquility of spirit for those retaining power and security meaning a stable setting for corruption, exploitation of workers and repression of farmers.

For Aung Sam Su Ki in Myanmar, the freedom fighters of China and the political prisoners of Indonesia who continue to languish in jail 30 years after being condemned to death, all of this is nothing more than painful proof of the criminal nature of such regimes, included amongst which was that of Ferdinand Marcos.

However, what is truly frightening is the fact that apparently democratic governments continue to detain political prisoners, labelling them criminals. Nothing is easier than such maneuvers to cloud the truth and to hide it from the eyes of the world. Jakarta is doing this in relation to East Timor. We therefore understand well the plight of political prisoners suffering under similar conditions.

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The democracy of the Philippines which we applauded so enthusiastically in its early stages, but which continues to be without substance, has shown itself to be quite clearly open to the influence of interests in conflict with democratic freedoms, as proven by its political subservience to Jakarta's generals on the occasion of the APCET Conference held in Manila in May last year. And it is this, finally, which explains the existence of the 291 political prisoners currently incarcerated in 57 prisons throughout the Philippines.

In New Bilibid Prison, Muntilupa, Manila, Filipino political prisoners have staged a hunger strike demanding the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners, the existence of which the government of Fidel Ramos is attempting to hide from the world. Democracy is incompatible with an absence of political freedom and with disrespect of the most fundamental rights of men and women.

As a small nation which has been brutally repressed by Indonesian colonialism, the East Timorese people deplore the existence of political prisoners in a so-called democratic country such as the Philippines and denounce the situation as one inappropriate to the post-Marcos era.

Long live solidarity among the oppressed!
Long live the common struggle for Peace, Justice and Freedom!

on behalf of CNRM

(signed)

Kay Rala Xanana Gusmao
Commander of the FALINTIL

Cipinang Prison, 4 February 1995